

THE ROYALSTON COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

February 2005



Volume VIII, Issue I

A PUBLICATION OF THE FRIENDS OF THE PHINEHAS S. NEWTON LIBRARY, ROYALSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Beauty can be a beast. A single snowflake or a window patterned in frost can knock your wool socks off, but the downside of winter is also well known: snow-bound driveways, heating costs, and icy feet between cold sheets... February weather is a good excuse to snuggle inside with a book and a cup of cocoa. Store up your sap now because there is a full plate of events, including a Town election, coming this spring. Fill out nomination papers to run for a Town position by 2/14.

Calendar of Events

February 1 Tuesday

5:00-7:00 p.m. **McDonald's Night.** 20% of all sales at the Athol McDonalds (at the jct. of Routes 2A and 202) will be donated to the RCS 6th grade's efforts to fund a week long field trip to Nature's Classroom on the Maine coast.

2 February Wednesday **Ground Hog's Day**

7:30 p.m. **Royalston Fish & Game Club meeting**
(Directors at 7 p.m.)

February 3 Thursday

No School at the Village School, K-6, for P-T Conferences

3:30 p.m. Friends of the Library Meeting at the library. All welcome to get involved with the newsletter, upcoming events, and other library support.

February 4 Friday

6:30 – 10:00p.m. **Last Open Mic of the season.** Performers sign up by calling Josh at 978-249-4260 or arriving early. Free admission; snacks and drinks available. Generally a nice multi-generational scene with an eclectic mix of music styles. Sponsored by the Cultural Council.

February 8 Tuesday **Shrove Tuesday; Mardi Gras**

5:28 p.m. **New Snow Moon**
5:00 p.m. RCS School Imp. Council, 6:30 p.m PTG Meeting

February 9 Wednesday

Ash Wednesday

Chinese New Year 4703: The Year of the Rooster

At sunset **Islamic New Year (Hegira) 1426**

February 10 Thursday

6:00 -8:00 pm **Cake Dance at RCS. All welcome.**



February 11 Friday

Noon **early dismissal at RCS.** Lunch served.

February 12 Saturday

Abraham Lincoln's Birthday

6:30 p.m. Congregational Churches' **Couples' Pot Luck Dinner**; singing, skits and more at the Parsonage.

February 14 Monday

St. Valentines' Day

The RCS 2nd grade is taking orders for **home-made Valentine cards.** No sentiment is too mushy. The \$1.00 price will be donated to the Red Cross and Oxfam for tsunami relief. Call 249-2900 to place your order or buy a card at the Phinehas S Newton Library.

5:00 p.m. **deadline for nomination papers for open positions in Town elections** to be submitted to Town Clerk

6:30 p.m. **Singles Pot Luck Dinner** at Parsonage

18 February Friday

At close of school: **1 week Winter Vacation** for local schools begins.

21 February Monday **George Washington's**

Birthday (observation) Library, Post Office closed

7:00 p.m. **RFD Rescue Training**

February 23 Wednesday

7:30 pm **Ladies Benevolent Society Meeting** with Rene Lake and Mark Shoul to discuss ways local adults can mentor area teens. At the home of Kimberly MacPhee. All members of community are invited to attend. Call 249-0946 for directions.

11:54 p.m. **Full Snow Moon**

February 24 Thursday

1:00-3:00 p.m. **Family Ice Sculpting** with Tom Kellner at the library. Materials provided. Adult help needed. Free. Call 978-249-3572 to register.

March 4 Friday

7:30 p.m. **Slide Show and Reception** with local naturalist Noah Siegel at the library. Beautiful slides and chances to ask questions about photography, local natural history, and the creation of the "Natural Treasures of Royalston Poster". Refreshments.

March 10,17,24,31 Thursday

3:30-4:30 p.m. **Cross Culture Club** at the library; learn about foreign lands and cultures from experts. Japan, Argentina, Poland and India. Geared to kids but all welcome. Pre-registration helpful.

March 14 Monday

7:00 p.m. **"Voices of Faith"** by special demand this Christian choir of dynamic youth will be returning to Royalston for their 4th consecutive year. Sponsored by the Congregational Churches.

March 15 Tuesday

2:00–4:00 pm and 7:00–8:00pm **Voter registration** at Whitney Hall. Last chance to register before April 4 Town election.

20 March Sunday **Palm Sunday**

7:33 a.m. **Vernal Equinox – First Day of Spring**

27 March Sunday **Easter Sunday**



Save the Date

April 1 Friday
7:00-9:00 p.m. **Dance of Fools Family Contra Dance** at Town Hall. Sponsored by the Friends of the Library. Free.

April 4 Friday **Town Elections**

April 8 Friday
evening **Spaghetti Supper and Talent Show** at RCS

April 22 Friday
7:00 p.m. **HaHa Sisterhood Improv Comedy Troupe** at Town Hall. Sponsored by the Friends of the Library with Cultural Council funding.

April 29 Friday
7:30 p.m. Film Premier, *Some Mournful Bird*, at the library. Award winning film by Royalston's own Taj Musco with a cameo performance by his dad, Tom. Refreshments. Free. Sponsored by the Royalston Cultural Council

May 8 Saturday
7:00 p.m. **Royalston Follies** at Town Hall.

Assessor's Notes

Stephen Chase, assessor

The tax bills are scheduled to be mailed out about the same time as this newsletter. The recent revaluation, which is done every three years, resulted in large value increases. The higher valuations are offset by the lower tax rate resulting in the usual moderate increase in what you will pay. If your bill took a huge jump or if you suspect an error, read the back of the bill for abatement filing instructions. There is only a 30 day period to file an abatement after which time the assessors cannot act. The Assessors meet the first and third Wednesdays from 7:00 to 9:00 PM at Whitney Hall. 249-0337.

Open Spaces

The brand new **open space committee** held its first meeting in January and set some priorities. The committee is looking to protect from development some open land which has particular recreational, scenic, historic or ecological value to our town. As the Town has no money to purchase any land, protecting open land will be a very slow and tricky business possibly involving combinations of grants, fund raising, land trust programs, general cajoling, and tax incentives. One of the first steps will be to study plot maps of Royalston to determine where land protection would give the most benefit. Recommendations from the public are actively sought. Open meetings will be held at Town Hall at 7:30 p.m. the second Thursday of the month beginning February 10. Committee members are Chris Long, Ed Goss, Dean Liciewicz, Patty Carrier, Kim MacPhee, Beth Gospodarek, Elizabeth Farnsworth and Aaron Ellison.

In addition, the selectmen recently appointed a **separate committee** to generate discussion about inevitable future growth in Royalston. It asks the question, "**How do we want this town to look in 5, 10 or 50 years?**" Complicated answers are expected. Watch this newsletter for updates and ways to influence our town's future.

Town News

Helen Divoll, Town Administrator

1) The **Selectboard meetings** for the month of February will be held on the 1st and the 15th.

2) **Town Elections** will be coming up the first Monday in April. Anyone interested in running for office, contact Town Clerk, Lloyd LeBlanc, for nomination papers. You may contact him at his office at Whitney Hall, (978) 249-0493 or at his home, (978) 249-7395 to make an appointment to get your papers.

3) There is an opening for the position of **Town Constable**. If you are interested in this position please contact the Selectmen's office. This will be an appointed position until the Town Election. You will need to take out nomination papers for the Town Election to keep this position beyond the elections.

4) The Town has funding from another **Housing Rehabilitation Grant**. Recently, you received a flyer in regards to this grant. If you are eligible, and are interested, contact Helen Divoll at the Selectmen's office at (978) 249-9641, for an application.

5) The Town is also applying for a grant to **update the town buildings to meet the American with Disability Act requirements**. Presently neither Town Hall nor Whitney Hall is handicapped accessible to the upper floors. The Town Hall needs to have an elevator or lift chair installed in order to use the auditorium for Town Meetings and Public activities. The ramp no longer meets the standards of ADA; there are other deficiencies in the building as well. At Whitney Hall, the restrooms are down in the basement and are not accessible to the handicapped, the ramp and doors do not meet ADA standards, the auditorium is not accessible to the handicapped and therefore no public activities or meetings can be held there. If you would like to see these projects taken care of, please send a letter to the Board of Selectmen stating how these changes will affect your ability to use these buildings. Please send your letters as soon as possible to ensure they are forwarded to the Grant writer for inclusion with the application.

Board of Health News

Phil Leger, chairman

The Royalston Transfer Station and Recycling Center welcomes Jan Vaccari as the new Saturday worker. Jan's the one with the big hair. Say hello to him next time you go there. Also, compost bins are still on sale for twenty dollars. There are free kitchen scrap buckets available for each purchase. Spring is around the corner. Also, a reminder that the windshield stickers are black and can be purchased from Charlie Divoll at the center. If you need to reach someone at the Board of Health you can page at 978-366-1553. The Center is open 1-4pm on Fridays and 8am-2pm on Saturdays. The phone number there is 978-249-6220. Let it ring.

Message from the Town Clerk

Lloyd LeBlanc

Hello, my name is Lloyd J. LeBlanc, I have been recently appointed as the Town Clerk of Royalston. My children and I have been living in Royalston for nearly 7 years now and we have owned our home for almost 5 years. Royalston has been good for all of us and we love living here.

I wanted to thank everyone in town for making me feel welcome as Town Clerk, especially Barbara Richardson who has gone out of her way to train and help me, and Helen Divoll who continually keeps me informed so that I don't miss anything while I am getting adjusted. I am looking forward to serving Royalston.

The Town Clerk office is open every Tuesday evening from 7 to 9 pm at Whitney Hall in South Royalston (entry in rear of building). If at any time, these hours are not convenient for you, please call and leave a voicemail (987-249-0493) or an email (lloydleb@yahoo.com, type the word 'clerk' in the subject box) and I will do my best to accommodate your need. I will check these messages frequently to try and keep the 'Clerk' accessible to everyone.

Upcoming Important Dates

1. 2005 – 06 dog licenses are in. Your 04 – 05 licenses will expire 31 Mar 2005.
2. 2005 season hunting / fishing licenses are also ready for sale.
3. For Town Department Heads, Town annual report is due to Helen by 28 Feb 2005 and to me soon thereafter. Please send your reports to me in electronic format either by email attachment (preferred) or by diskette. If you don't have this capability, then of course a paper copy is great. Thanks for your help; this will make formatting for printing much easier.
4. Town Elections are 4 Apr 2005
 - Voter registration will be held on 15 Mar 2005 (you must be registered in Royalston to vote) at Whitney Hall 2 – 4 pm and 7 – 8pm. To run for an open position, submit nomination papers to me no later than 14 Feb, by 5pm. (nomination papers are available at the office or by contacting me)

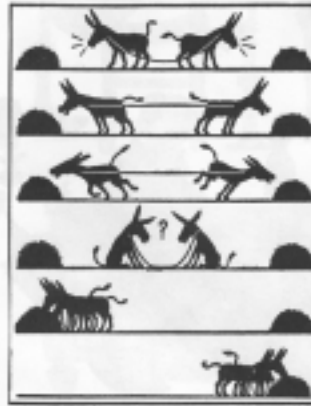
Open Positions in the April 05 Town Elections.

Until nomination papers are filed, it is undetermined which incumbents are running for re-election.

Position	Term	Incumbent
1. Selectman	3 year	Gary Winitzer
2. Town Clerk	2 year	(to complete Barbara's term)Lloyd LeBlanc
3. Constable	1 year	(to complete Wm. Deveneau's term)
4. Assessor	3 year	Jim Richardson
5. Cemetery Commissioner	3 year	John Divoll
6. Board of Health	3 year	Phil Leger
7. Library Trustee	3 year	Mary Longworth
8. Board of Public Welfare	3 year	Wayne Newton
9. Planning Board	5 year	Wayne Newton
10. Sewer Commissioner	3 year	?? Frazoli
11. Sewer Commissioner	2 year	(to complete Vickie Payne's term)Marie
12. Trustee of JM Bartlet Fund	1 year	
13. Trustee of JM Bartlet Fund	1 year	
14. Trustee of JM Bartlet Fund	1 year	
15. Trustee of JM Bartlet Fund	1 year	
16. School Committee	3 year	Vyto Andreliunas

Open Burning Season

Got brush? Open burning season goes from January 15 – May 1, 2005. A new burning permit is required each year. These permits are available on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Mondays of the month at 7:00 at the center fire station. Once residents have a permit, they must call the fire department at 978-249- 8138 each time they intend to burn and listen to the message for possible weather restrictions. If the conditions are favorable, residents must leave a message including their name, address, phone number, and fire permit number before burning.



Department of Public Works Update

Keith Newton, supervisor

Residents are reminded to stop discharging, throwing and plowing snow in or across the street from their driveways. DPW staff

has been frustrated to find roads they have recently plowed re-filled with snow. Piling snow from driveways into roads creates a public hazard and homeowners can be found responsible if an accident is caused. This has been a costly winter at the DPW. There is a lot of aged iron in the DPW equipment, and the frequent small snow storms of December and January have taken a toll.

Construction projects are on hold until spring. School St will be finished up then. The DPW is searching for grant money to undertake other prioritized paving and reclamation projects.

What Happened at Town Meeting?

On January 14 a Special Town Meeting was held. Due to increased tax revenues and better than projected state aid, \$100,000 in Certified Free Cash was added to the town Stabilization Account. The library budget was increased by \$1000 so that it can remain a Massachusetts Certified Library and thereby enjoy state services like interlibrary loans, check out privileges with other public libraries, opportunities for grants, and access to internet academic databases such as Infotrac. A little over \$3000 was taken from the Stabilization Account to pay an overdue auto insurance bill. Around \$9000 from the Stabilization Account was earmarked for the tax collector to fund the process of Tax Title takings in order to pursue some of the \$110,000 owed to the town in delinquent taxes. Because of concerns about potential health insurance costs, voters declined to keep the town administrator's position at 24 hours as had been approved at the Annual Town Meeting last May. The Personnel and Finance committees plan to make recommendations for a more comfortable and permanent solution to this issue at the upcoming Annual Town Meeting in May. Finally, it was approved to raise and appropriate \$57,000 to the Town Stabilization Account.

Phinehas S. Newton Library News

Kathy Morris, Library Director

Trustees: Polly Longsworth, Lisa Freden, Barbara Guiney

Mondays: 10:00am - 5:00pm and 6:30 - 8:30pm. Thursdays: 1:00pm - 5:00pm and 6:30 - 8:30pm

Saturdays: 9:00am - 12:00noon

978-249-3572 www.royalstonlibrary.org

Thank You

To everyone, especially **Barbara Stowell, Jen Bartkus, and Beth Gospodarek**, for the wonderful librarian appreciation day. I was very touched by the warmth of this wonderful party. And I was glad I found out about the party ahead of time. **Benjamin Morris-Siegel** kindly loaned me his camera for the party, so I could take lots of pictures too.

Ferron Dooley Fairchild for her steadfast and competent help with all aspects of library work.

Shannah Lively and **Daniel Demboske** for their productive and helpful community service volunteer work.

Frank Stearns and **Janet Bettey** for donation of books and movies.

Norah Dooley for great holiday storytelling with the preschool story time

Tim Bartkus for tree work and to **Jen Bartkus** and **Larry Snider** for help picking up the branches.

Rare Reference Book Donated

Frank Stearns, who grew up in Royalston, is a constant newsletter supporter, and has given inspiring organ concerts in town, recently donated a copy of the book, *The Johnson Organs* by John Van Varick Elsworth. The book recounts the interesting history of the founding of the Johnson Organ Company in Westfield. There are several of these high quality organs in the area including the one in the First Congregational Church in Royalston, two each in Athol and Orange, and one each in Petersham and Gardner. This informative book is out-of-print and rare and we are fortunate to have this copy available for perusal at the library.

Donations to the Friends

The following people have paid membership dues or made financial contributions to the Friends of the Library since our last issue. Our thanks to you for supporting the Library, the Friends, and this Newsletter:

Lisa and Glenn Freden

The MacPhee Family

Theresa Quinn, George Krasowski and family

Raeann LaBlanc & Roger O'Donnell

Pat Shea & Don Igoe

Don and Elvia Richards

Sharon Harmon

Didn't Get your Newsletter?

Bulk mail is cheap, but fallable. The Friends of the Library pay for the RCN to be mailed to all Royalston homes, but inevitably a few go astray. If residents don't receive a copy in the mail early in the month, there are usually extras available at the Country Store, post office and library. The newsletter is also available electronically at www.royalstonlibrary.org. Out of town subscribers who do not receive their copy should e-mail the newsletter (chasegos@gis.net) or call the library (978-249-0352).

High Speed Internet and New Computer Coming

After much deliberation, some setbacks and some misgivings, **satellite high-speed internet service is being installed at the library**. Assuming we can find a site for the dish and receive a signal, the wiring will be laid and the staff and patrons will be testing the service for the next few weeks. Watch for the big announcement (or disappointment) next month. The Friends of the Library are also **replacing the old computer** in the Young Adult room awarded to the library by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners seven years ago. These welcome additions are made possible by the generous "Beyond the Box" contribution to the library by Jon Hardie and Rebecca Krause-Hardie through Fieldstone Press. These monies are equivalent to the average monthly printing cost of the newsletter and are earmarked for the purpose of technological improvements. "Beyond the Box" funds have already been utilized to purchase the other new computer and software at the library. To date, no town monies have been used to purchase any computer at the library.

What's New at the Library Web-site?

Log on www.royalstonlibrary.org for current and archival editions of this newsletter; the complete list of new books at the library; photos from library events including the recent Librarian Appreciation Day celebrating Kathy Morris' 10th anniversary as director here; and a version of the Natural Wonders of Royalston Poster, which the Friends of the library are selling at the rock bottom price of \$5.00 as a fundraiser.

Preschool Story Time

Mondays 10:30-11:30 am

Stories read by Jen Bartkus

Healthy snacks

Play and sharing for the kids

Conversation and company for parents and caregivers

Free, no registration, drops-ins welcome.

Funded by the Athol-Royalston Community Partnership for Children

Upcoming Events at the Library

The Friends of the Library are sponsoring a flurry of interesting free events for late winter and spring. Call the library for more information or to pre-register at 978-249-3572:

February School Vacation Program: Ice Sculpting

The iceman cometh to our library. On Thursday Feb. 24 from 1:00-3:00 p.m., families can join local ice sculptor, Tom Kellner, in creating illuminated art out of ice. Tom will be creating the centerpiece and kids and adults will have the chance to make their own adorned sculptures. As ice is heavy and tools are sharp, parental and other adult participation is strongly encouraged. There will also be some tools and stories relating the history of ice cutting in Royalston. Hot chocolate provided. Pre-registration is very helpful. Adults (with or without kids) who are willing to assist, please call the library as well.

Cross Culture Club

Thursdays after school in March, learn about other parts of our world right here at the local library. Language, art, food, games, geography, traditions and/or politics are some of the topics that may be addressed by our native presenters. It is a club, not a class, so the intent is to have fun while expanding world view.

March 10 Ruth Suyenega on Japan
March 17 Lily Moresco Carra on Argentina
March 24 Jigar and Sona Panchal on India
March 31 Poland (we hope)

All sessions meet from 3:30-4:30 p.m. Open to all ages. (RCS students can take the bus from school to the library with a permission slip.) Pre-registration very helpful.

Save those One-liners:

Comedy Workshop during April Vacation

If you are aged 8 to 18 and have yearned to be a comedian, get ready. During April school vacation, Norah Dooley and Maile Shoul will be leading comedy improvisation workshops during the week. Then on Friday, April 22nd, the Ha-Ha Sisterhood, a well-known improvisational comedy group, will be presenting a family comedy show preceded by Royalston's own improv troop made up of participants from the workshop. Stay tuned for more information in coming newsletters and at the library. And thanks to the Royalston Cultural Council and Friends of the Library for funding these great programs.

Narrated Slide Show and Reception with naturalist Noah Siegel



On March 4 at 7:30 p.m., enjoy an evening of beautiful slides of the natural world with self-taught, local photographer and naturalist, Noah Siegel. He recently donated his work to the **Friends of the Library** fundraising "**Natural Treasures of Royalston**" poster, which will be available that evening and can always be had for **\$5.00 at the library, post office, Bruce's Browser, North Quabbin Woods and the Royalston General Store**. The slides used to make this poster, as well as other intricate shots of local landscapes, fauna, fungi and flora (including many mushrooms, an endangered wood turtle and a rare wild clematis) will be shown and commented upon. A few slides from the photographer's travels in Labrador, Montana and the Great Smokey Mountains may also be thrown in. Pique your memories of colors in summer; ask questions about photography, computer layout and/or the local woods. Tuck into refreshments afterwards.

Dance of Fools Family Contra Dance

At 7:00 p.m. at Town Hall on Friday, April Fools' Day, join caller Norah Dooley and the No Name Band to sashay, promenade and waltz away the evening. Very family friendly; adults sans kids welcome too. All dances taught. It is special to have this traditional dance with traditional live music in a traditional setting-all for free. Desserts and coffee served.

Royalston Film Premier, Taj Musco's *Some Mournful Bird*

On Friday, April 29 at 7:30 at the library, attend a screening of Taj Musco's film "Some Mournful Bird", which won the Best Actor in a Short Film Award from the New York International Independent Film and Video Festival. <http://www.nyfilmvideo.com/2004/la2004/laawardssep04.htm>

The Royalston premier is sponsored by the Royalston Cultural Council. Taj is filming an introduction and director's comments especially for the Royalston screening of his film.

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LEAVE A MESSAGE

The New Books: for a complete list of all new materials, including children's works and new movies, please visit our website at www.royalstonlibrary.org.



Adult Fiction

Baldacci, David. *Split Second*
Baldacci, David. *Hour Game*
Baxter, Charles. *The Feast of Love*
Beaton, M.D. *The Deadly Dance*
Berry, Wendell. *Hannah Coulter*
Bradford, Barbara Taylor. *Unexpected Blessings: A Novel*
Braun, Lilian Jackson. *The Cat Who Went Bananas*
Brockway, Connie. *My Pleasure*
Cabot, Meg. *The Mediator 3: Reunion*
Cabot, Meg. *The Mediator 4: Darkest Hour*
Cabot, Meg. *The Mediator 5: Haunted*
Cabot, Meg. *The Mediator 6: Twilight*
Caldwell, Ian. *The Rule of Four*
Crichton, Michael. *State of Fear*
Cussler, Clive. *Black Wind*
Davidson, Diane Mott. *Double Shot*
Evanovich, Janet. *One For the Money*
Follett, Ken. *Whiteout*
Godwin, Gail. *The Finishing School*
Grafton, Sue. "A" is for Alibi
Green, Jane. *Mr. Maybe*
Grisham, John. *The Broker*
Hillerman, Tony. *Skeleton Man*
Jones, Linda Winstead. *The Sun Witch*
Kaminsky, Stuart M. *The Last Dark Place*
King, Cassandra. *The Same Sweet Girls*
King, Stephen. *Song of Susannah*
Koontz, Dean. *Life Expectancy*
Kusel, Lisa. *Other Fish in the Sea*

Lescroart, John. *The Motive*
McBain, Ed. *Alice in Jeopardy*
McBride, Mary. *Say It Again, Sam.*

McCall Smith, Alexander. *The Girl Who Married a Lion and Other Tales from Africa*
Mitchell, Stephen. *Meetings with the Archangel: A Comedy of the Spirit*
Naipaul, V.S. *Magic Seeds*
Patterson, James. *London Bridges*
Pierce, Tamora. *Trickster's Queen*
Proulx, Annie. *Bad Dirt: Wyoming Stories 2*
Rabe, Jean. *The Finest Creation*
Rice, Luanne. *Follow the Stars Home*
Roberts, Nora. *The Gift*
Roberts, Nora. *Blue Dahlia*
Roberts, Nora. *The Calhouns: Catherine, Amanda and Lilah*
Thayer, Nancy. *The Hot Flash Club Strikes Again*
Vreeland, Susan. *Life Studies: Stories*
Wolfe, Tom. *I Am Charlotte Simmons*
Young, Elizabeth. *Asking for Trouble*

Adult Biography

Carter, Jimmy. *Sharing Good Times.*

Adult Books-on-Tape

McCall Smith, Alexander. *The Sunday Philosophy Club.*
Bayley, John. *Elegy for Iris*
Jewish Short Stories from Eastern Europe and Beyond

Adult Books-on-CD

Caldwell, Ian. *The Rule of Four*
Follett, Ken. *Whiteout*
McCullers, Carson. *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*
Spanish in 10 Minutes a Day

Adult Non-Fiction

Kabit-Zinn, Jon. *Coming to Our Senses: Healing Ourselves and the World Through Mindfulness*
Canfield, Jack. *The Success Principles. How to Get From Where You Are to Where You Want to Be*
Cox, Harvey. *When Jesus Came to Harvard: Making Moral Choices Today*
Behrendt, Greg. *He's Just Not That Into You: The No-Excuses Truth to Understanding Guys.*
Cooley, Robert. *When Corruption Was King: How I Helped the Mob Rule Chicago, Then Brought the Outfit Down*
Schaefer, Vincent J. *A Field Guide to the Atmosphere.* 1981.
Skehan, James W. *Roadside Geology of Massachusetts*
Grandin, Temple. *Animals in Translation: Using the Mysteries of Autism to Decode Animal Behavior.*
Legsdon, Gene. *All Flesh is Grass. The Pleasures and Promises of Pasture Farming.*
Bolen, Jean Shinoda. *Close to the Bone: Life-Threatening Illness and the Search for Meaning*
Reichel, Ruth (editor). *The Gourmet Cookbook: More Than 1000 Recipes*
McGee, Harold. *On Food and Cooking, The Science and Lore of the Kitchen.* 2004 edition.
Perricone, Nicholas. *The Perricone Prescription*
Mauzy, Barbara. *Mauzy's Depression Glass: A Photographic Reference with Prices.*
Dylan, Bob. *Chronicles*
Burroughs, Augusten. *Running with Scissors.*
Burroughs, Augusten. *Magical Thinking.*
Gutkind, Lee (editor). *In Fact: The Best of Creative Nonfiction*
Nafisi, Azar. *Reading Lolita in Tehran.*
Carlin, George. *When Will Jesus Bring the Pork Chops?*
Loh, Sandra Tsing. *A Year in Van Nuys.*

Library Staff Picks

These are some books Kathy Morris, Jen Bartkus, Barbara Stowell and Beth Gospodarek have been enjoying lately. How about you? Got a book you'd like to recommend? Send it along to the RCN, so reader mini-reviews can become a regular feature.

For Adults:

When Jesus Came to Harvard: Making Moral Choices Today by Harvey Cox - morality for contemporary life based on Cox's rendering of the stories of Jesus. **Magical Thinking** and **Running With Scissors** by Augusten Burroughs - hysterically funny and sad at the same time. Memoirs set in Shutesbury, Northampton, and Amherst (and NY). Graphic at times and not for the easily offended. **The Deadly Dance: An Agatha Raisin Mystery** by M. C. Beaton - good writing and a good story of an imperfect heroine. **Snowflake** by physicist Kenneth Libbrecht with beautiful photos by Patricia Rassmussen. Explains why snow has 6 sides, why it is faceted, and why most snow flakes are irregular rather than symmetrical. Gives history of early scientists and layfolk that studied snow: My favorite is Frances Pickering, an 1850s ministers wife from Portland Me who filled books with scientifically accurate snowflakes she had cut from paper. Very readable and informative.

For Young Adults:

Peter and the Starcatchers by Dave Barry and Ridley Pearson - Peter Pan's prequille - a real pageturner. **The Teacher's Funeral** by Richard Peck - humorous historical fiction. All his books are good. **Dragonslayer** by Cornelia Funke - A great adventure fantasy. **The Fall of Fergal** by Phillip Ardagh (book on tape)- a dark but silly story about the McNally family sneaking into a typing contest.. The actor who reads , Joe Barrett, does incredible and charming accents . Speeds up car trips with grade 3 and up.

For children:

The Librarian of Basra: A True Story from Iraq by Jeanette Winter - how a librarian saved the books in her library in war torn Iraq. **You Read to Me, I'll Read to You: Very Short Fairy Tales to Read Together** by Mary Ann Hoberman - Fairy tales with a twist - two people each read one side of the page. **Delightful Wild About Books** by Judy Sierra - The librarian, who made a wrong turn into the zoo, shares books with the animals. **Big Day on the River** by Sarah Wilson - Willie's raft trip gets loaded down by her loving relatives. **Buster's Big Snow** by Hisako Madokoro - oldie and a goodie.

Get Your Act Together

For a little town, there sure all a lot of opportunities to strut your stuff. Creative fun in your hometown:

First Friday Open Mic: On February 4 from 6:30 – 10:00p.m. **enjoy the last Open Mic of the season.** Melanie Mangum MCs and your friends and neighbors entertain. Performers sign up by calling Josh at 978-249-4260 or arriving early. No entry fee. Free admission; snacks and drinks available. Generally a nice multi-generational scene with an eclectic mix of music styles. Sponsored by the Cultural Council.

RCS Talent Show and Spaghetti Supper: “Gee guys, we can save this field trip fund; we’ll put on a musical!” Thus, the RCS parent teacher group designated the evening of Friday April 8th a big night of food, entertainment and raffles. A classic meal with pasta, salad and bread will be followed by the Really Big Show. Solo acts or groups are welcome to compete for fabulous prizes. RCS students will be the focus, but community members, Village School students, siblings, parents, cousins, teachers and other friends are welcome to make up 5 minute acts with RCS students or alone. Singers, poets, orators, magicians, ventriloquists, gymnasts, clowns, dancers, fashionistas, musicians, actors, satirists, mimes, comics and anyone else who has an act appropriate to an elementary school audience is encouraged to participate. No entry fee. Info on dinner, raffle and show tickets will be in March newsletter. Call Beth Gospodarek 249-0358 with questions.

The Follies Are Coming . . . The Follies Are Coming

After several postponements last year due to circumstances beyond our control, the Cultural is pleased to announce that the latest rendition of the Royalston Follies will be held on Saturday, May 14, 2005, with dress rehearsal the evening prior, Friday, May 13th. For those of you unfamiliar with this popular event, this is a variety show by mostly Royalston residents, M.C.’d by Phil Leger, with awards given for the top three acts. The Cultural Council provides baked goods; beer, wine and soda are available for purchase; and the entrance fee is a bargain at only \$5.00. Tickets are limited (due to space regulations) and we always sell out. Look in the March Newsletter for more details on how to purchase your ticket. If you are interested in getting in on the act(s), please call Patience Bundschuh at 978-249-6018.

Council on Aging News

Deb Nunes

Actually, there isn’t much news right now, as we are all hunkered down during this coldest and snowiest part of the year. **The Royalston Luncheon Club** continues to meet each Wednesday at the Town Hall for lunch and conversation. The lunch is \$2.00 and reservations can be made by calling Dorothy Newton the Monday prior. The Chinese Auction is held the first Wednesday and the Blood Pressure Clinic and Brown Bag Distribution are held the fourth Wednesday. We hope to schedule some outings when the weather gets better, probably starting in March. The COA meets regularly the second Thursday of the month at Dorothy Newton’s house on Athol Road. The next meeting will be on February 10th. Call Deb Nunes at 978-249-4000 for more details.

Ladies: Want some Fun and Exercise?

Ever considered bowling? A league of women bowlers – about a dozen from Royalston and a few from Winchendon – meet Monday mornings at PLAYAWAY LANES on Summer St. in Winchendon (just before the Clark Memorial, which is across from the Post Office) for three strings of bowling. The group is definitely more fun than heavy-duty competition; there are players at all levels, including a couple of absolute beginners. Members are divided into teams of three, and teams compete against each other on rotation. You may join as a single, or as one of a team. Games are each Monday from 9:30 a.m. to about 11:30 a.m., September through May. Shoe rentals and use of house bowling balls are available at no cost during league play; personally owned shoes and bowling balls may be used. For additional information, contact Ginny Gingras at 978-249-4951 or Donna Smith at 978-249-9687.

Royalston Fish & Game Club News

The F&G held a successful Christmas party for kids in December under the direction of **Ginny Gingras** and **Tracy Smith**. The pair bought and wrapped gifts, which were distributed by Santa, who took time from his busy schedule for the event. Mrs. Smith baked cupcakes and whipped up some homemade frosting in red and green for refreshments, the children frosted and decorated their own cupcakes. Also, a **worker appreciation dinner** was held recently at the Royalston Fish & Game Club to thank the many volunteers who make the organization successful. These volunteers make repairs, generous donations and in general, keep their facility in extraordinary condition and make a number of opportunities available.



Fire and Rescue News/ERV Fundraising

Treasurer James M. Putney reports that a year-end solicitation letter sent to non-resident Royalston property holders, combined with some generous year-end donations sent by former donors, brought in nearly \$5,000 for ERV. The fund is still approximately \$25,000 short of its goal of \$100,000, however, and prices to buy ERV are now over that initial goal amount. Members of the Royalston Firefighters’ Association have worked long and hard; the relatively small corps of workers has invested more than two years of planning and running fundraising events, and frankly, they’re about out of steam.

The Royalston Firefighters’ Association would like to purchase this badly needed Emergency Rescue Vehicle without spending tax dollars. If you haven’t made a contribution to this worthy cause or if you’ve donated once upon a time and would like to enjoy a tax deduction for the 2005 tax season, please, donate now. If your civic organization would like to make a donation, if your company would like to contribute, if your charitable organization would like to run a fundraiser on behalf of ERV, now’s the time.

Tax deductible **donations are welcome at any time**, and are to the full extent of the tax laws. Donations may be mailed to James M. Putney; 185 North Fitzwilliam; Royalston, MA 01368.

Scholarships Available:

Katherine Seymour Bullock Cole Memorial Scholarship

(Deadline is April 15). The Katherine Seymour Bullock Cole Memorial Scholarship in the amount of \$500 is available to a resident of Royalston going on to higher education. This scholarship is sponsored by the Royalston Academy in memory of the Academy's founder, Katherine Cole. Applications are available from Joanne Caisse, Athol High School; Jean Mulins, Montachusett Vocational Technical School or from Patience Bundschuh Royalston Academy Scholarship Committee, box 105, Royalston, MA 01368. Completed applications should be mailed or delivered to Patience Bundschuh, Royalston Academy Scholarship Committee, box 105, Royalston, MA 01368

The 1794 Meetinghouse Offers Three Scholarships for \$100 Each.

(Deadline is April 1) One for a graduating Mahar senior, one for a graduating Athol High senior and one for any college bound senior or home schooled student in the nine town North Quabbin area. Scholarships are for students aspiring to study any field related to the performing arts. Applications are available at the school's guidance counselor's offices or write to: 1794 Meetinghouse Education Committee/ 6 Old Main Street, New Salem MA 01355.

Athol High School Scholarship Association Scholarships (Deadline is April 1)

are available for Royalston graduates of AHS planning to attend college on a full-time (12 credits per semester) basis. Graduate-level programs are not eligible. Applications are available from William Chiasson at 978-249-4736 or by e-mail at chiasson@trysb.net.

Ladies' Benevolent Society of Royalston Scholarships (Deadline is April 15)

are offered exclusively to Royalston residents. Scholarships (\$300 and \$250) are available for public, private, vocational-technical and home schooled graduates, and for adults returning to school. Academic achievement is a priority. Memorial Scholarships are offered in the names of H. Pauline Smith, Maxine Wilcox, Clara Mimms, Dorothy Corser and Patricia C. Poor. Applications are available at Athol High School guidance office or a letter, which includes transcripts, extra-curricular/community activities, education/ career plans and any other pertinent information may be sent to LBS Scholarship Chairman Nancy S. Bolton; 16 Bolton Rd.; Royalston, MA 01368-8954.

Cultural Council News

The Royalston Cultural Council met in November and awarded the yearly Lottery Arts Council grant monies to the following applicants: The 1794 Meetinghouse, Aspire to the Arts Summer Series which mixes local talent with international performers in a wide array of performing arts events; Richard Hamelin, Pied Potter Hamelin's Magical Wheel, creating basic forms on the wheel and transforming them into dragons, gnomes, etc., to be run in conjunction with the Friends of the Library; Joshua Morris-Siegel, Royalston Open Mic, to continue and support this very popular venue for local musicians to perform in a friendly environment; Phinehas S. Newton Library, Ha-Ha Sisterhood, a comedy improvisational group that will hold intensive workshops for children on comedy routines and acts; Royalston Community School, support for their annual trip to Mt. Wachusett's Theatre at the Mount; and The Village School, Native American presentation with Tim Kelley offering a Native American program in traditional regalia.

The Cultural Council is looking for new members. We meet on an as-needed basis, usually about a half dozen times per year. We sponsor the annual Music Festival in July; the Christmas Tree Lighting; the Royalston Follies; and get together in the fall to award the grants. The next meeting is scheduled for Sunday, Feb. 6th at 2:00 pm at Pat Andreliunas' house. We'll be done well before the Super Bowl begins. For more information, please contact Patience Bundschuh at 978-249-6018.

Athol Lion's Club Scholarships (Mid-April deadlines) are for Royalston students at AHS, Monty Tech or who are home schooled. Ten general scholarships, generally \$200 are awarded, and two memorial scholarships will be awarded this year, one in memory of Dr. Aaron for community service and one in memory of Richard C. Phillips, Jr., for a vocational-technical student. Scholarship criteria and applications should be available the first week in February at school guidance offices, or by contacting Lion's Club Scholarship Committee chairman Toni Phillips at 978-249-7909.

Donald T. Black Memorial Scholarships (May 6 deadline)

are open to students who have attended a minimum of three years in Royalston elementary schools. Applicants must also be a graduating senior or have successfully completed high school, vocational high school or the GED/high school equivalency diploma course. Applicants will be accepted to a minimum two-year degree program. Applications are available through AHS and Monty Tech guidance departments, and at the Royalston Community School. Questions may be addressed to Janice Lefebvre at 978-249-2900.

Veterans' Scholarships (Rolling deadline)

are available to Royalston residents who attended public, private, vocational-technical or home school, and who have financial need. Requests are put into writing, in the form of letters and essays, the format of which is up to the applicant. Scholarships include Disabled American Veteran Scholarships for the offspring of a disabled veteran and for the offspring of any veteran. Vietnam Veterans of America offer a scholarship for the offspring of a Vietnam veteran or, if no other appropriate applicant is found, one for the offspring of any veteran. Requests should be sent to DAV/VVA; Box 746; Athol, MA 01331.

fieldstone press

Royalston Community School News

Mrs. French, Principal

We all hope that the New Year will bring happiness, prosperity, and good health. Chinese New Year will be celebrated on February 9th. Students and staff will wear red, enjoy a Chinese food lunch, and make lanterns to conclude the celebration.

We have welcomed Vanessa Passaro as our new art teacher. She comes to us from the Cape. She is very excited and enthusiastic. The children are also excited to have a new art teacher. Look for wonderful projects.

Upcoming Events:

Feb. 1- McDonalds' Night

If you and your family eat at McD.'s in Athol tonight from 5-7PM-20% of the sales will go to the Nature's Classroom trip account.

Feb. 8th 5:00 School Imp. Council, 6:30 PTG Meeting

Feb. 10 6-8pm Cake Dance

Exciting Happenings: The students are reading to succeed through a program sponsored by Six Flags. Each child who reads for 6hrs at home will earn a ticket to Six Flags! Completed forms need to be turned in by Feb. 15th.

Chess Club is being offered on Friday afternoons. Over 30 kids participate. It is being facilitated by local chess champ, Noah Siegel. Also a popular Spanish Club is meeting on Thurs. afternoons. The instructor is Lilliana Moresco Carra, who has been a teacher and educator for the past 15 years. She comes to the U.S. from Argentina. Funding for the club comes from the Athol-Royalston Education Foundation.

Coming soon:

A talent show and spaghetti dinner will be here in early April. RCS alum and other community members are welcome to put an act together for the show.

Two Diamante Poems by the RCS Poetry Club



SNOWSTORM

cold, white
shining, snowing, sparkling
slushy, slippery, wet, wet
dripping, drumming, splashing
ripples, clear
RAINSTORM

SNOWSTORM

feather pillows
drifting, blowing, piling
frozen, flakes, water, drops
pouring, flowing, streaming
wet, spring
RAIN SHOWER

by Devin Bates, Michele Thompson, Shelby Bronnes, Darion James, Jaryth LaRoche and Benjamin Boudreau

by Katelyn Robinson, Tiffany Lusco, Chelsea Sanderson, Tobey Chase, Derek Bates, and Austin Kinsman

Mount Wachusett Community College

Black History Month will be celebrated at MWCC with an exhibit on many of the inventions and innovations brought forth by black Americans. Among the displays will be the golf tee, automatic traffic light, cellular phone and the world's fastest computer. The exhibit is sponsored by the Office for Student Life, and is slated for Friday, February 11, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the student commons area, just inside the main entrance.

Monty Tech News

Applications for the 2005-2006 school year are now available, and there will be many more submitted than the 350 freshman seats available. If all towns in the district were to fill all of their seats, Royalston, by regional agreement, is entitled to just THREE freshman seats. That's unlikely, so after each town's ON-TIME applicants have been accepted, extra seats go to the highest-scoring, ON-TIME applicants, regardless of town. If you/your eighth grader is even remotely considering the possibility of attending Monty Tech, please make sure to **have your completed application in prior to March 31, 2005**. Applications are available on the web site at www.montytech.net or by phone request to the guidance office at 978-345-9200 or 978-632-8889 ext. 5235.

The **Monty Tech continuing education offers nearly 200 programs**, ranging from computer and office skills to self-improvement classes for smokers. There are children's programs in first aid and cooking; there are adult classes in American Sign Language and advanced cake decoration. Work towards a license: nursing, electrician, lab technician, office worker and more. Affordable classes are fun and may lead to new job opportunities. To receive a **Monty Tech continuing education** booklet, please call 978-345-9200 ext. 5220

Athol-Royalston Education Foundation Funds Enrichment Programs in Local Schools

The Athol-Royalston Education Foundation (A-REF) recently gave \$5000 to the Athol-Royalston Regional School district to fund creative projects that are beyond the funding capabilities of the school budget. A-REF puts in the money and individual teachers and community members put in the work and imagination to organize and run these programs.

Many Royalston students will directly benefit this spring. At the Royalston Community School, three clubs: math, Spanish and photography were supported. In addition, A-REF is a major donor to the multi-cultural fair each year at the middle school, and is funding a birds of prey science unit at Athol High School. Past A-REF mini-grants in Royalston have included construction of the Sandy Waters' Nature Trail, an orienteering club and the first year of the RCS Chess Club. In addition, elementary schools in Athol have received funds for their own arts, science, literacy, and history sorts of projects. Priority is given to projects which bring the community into the schools.

With continued donor generosity, A-REF hopes to increase the amount of support it can offer school enrichment projects. Become a member by sending your tax deductible donation to A-REF, Box 149, Athol MA 01331. Questions? Call local A-REF board members Beth Gospodarek or Carla Rabinowitz.



Congratulations and Good News

Got something to crow about? Drop the news by the library or e-mail chasegos@gis.net.

Congratulations and apologies to **Rebecca Paine**, who was inadvertently left off the middle school honor roll last issue. *The RCN tries hard to include everyone's achievements, but remember there are no paid reporters here, and we can't print what we don't know. That means it's up to readers to send submissions of births, kudos memorials and other news.*

Kudos to **Justin Cascone**. He is having a terrific basketball season at Athol-Royalston Middle School and recently won \$130 for sinking a half-court shot during a half time competition at AHS.

Kim Basset is part of a statewide juried exhibition of high school art on display through February 18th at the Massachusetts State Transportation building at 10 Park Plaza in Boston. This Scholastic Arts Award competition is sponsored by the Boston Globe.

Kathy Chencharik received an Honorable Mention from ByLine Magazine for Flash Fiction for her short story "It Hurts to be Hoyte."

Jean Johnson, grand daughter of **Colleen MacManus**, will be touring relatively nearby as principle clarinetist for the Singapore Symphony this March. Stops include Lincoln Center, West Point, and Schenectady in New York as well as Spain. She has performed all over Europe and Asia and just returned from a solo performance in China. After the tour, she will be retiring from the symphony to live with her new husband, classical pianist, Steve Osborne, (who is also touring the US and Canada this March), in Linlithgow, Scotland; she will continue to perform independently. Colleen hopes to visit this summer to celebrate her 70th birthday.

Bon Voyage to **Ashley Willhite**, who is studying urban planning in Brazil, South Africa and France this semester.

First term honor roll students at Athol High included many Royalston students. Honors were earned by ninth graders **Ellee J. Bronnes, Dana R. Griffith, Andrew R. Martioski, Emily E. Parnanen** and **Daniel J. Seco**; tenth graders **Dustin K. Short** and **Daniel K. Vaccari**; eleventh graders **David W. Coflesky, Ashley L. Coulombe, Brendon D. Kellner, Erin L. Martioski, Skylar E. Ryll** and **Kayla P. Thompson**; and seniors **Timothy E. Aldrich, Kimberly A. Bassett, James P. Charest, and Amande E. Wessels**. high honors included: **Ashley E. Bergquist, Stephanie E. Bennett, Shannah C. Lively** and **Elizabeth A. Wheeler**.

First term honor roll students at Monty Tech: **Cotey Basso, Ashley Gladden, Emily Putney** and **Brittany Warren**. High honors were earned by **April Doucette, Danielle Gaudet, Amber McCassie, Jennifer Taylor, Phillip Trask** and **Megan Wessels**.

Ferron Dooley Fairchild was named to the Dean's List at Mt. Wachusett Community College in Gardner.

Memorials

Belated condolences to Walter Hubbard of Athol-Richmond Road, on the passing of his brother, **Thomas P. Hubbard**, 56, of Winchester, NH. Thomas Hubbard died at his home on Saturday, November 27, 2004, just three weeks after being diagnosed with bone cancer.

Condolences to James M. Barclay, who recently traveled to Smyrna, GA for a memorial service held for his brother **Robert Powell Barclay**, 76, who died peacefully, in his sleep, at home, on January 22.

Military News

Kevin Nunes, son of **Deborah and Joseph Nunes** of West Royalston, was recently highlighted in the Winchendon Courier, when he returned to Murdock High and spoke to the Youth in Law class about his recent United States Army basic training, and of his assignment as a Military Police Officer in Korea. Nunes, who admitted that his quick tongue earned him countless push-ups at the beginning of his basic training, achieved expert rank twice in marksmanship and once in grenades.

Recipe of the Month: School Mac and Cheese

February is a month for comfort food. Kids at the Royalston Community School clamor for cook Rhonda Bishop's macaroni and cheese. Relive the warm hub-bub of chattering friends, scraping chairs and gulping milk from tiny cartons. This recipe serves 12.

- 1 lb. macaroni
- 1/2 cup butter or margarine
- 3/4 cup flour
- 1 tsp salt
- 3/4 tsp dry mustard
- 1/4 tsp pepper
- 3/4 tsp paprika
- 5 cups milk
- 1 tsp Worcestershire sauce
- 2 3/4 cup shredded cheese (Rhonda uses 1 3/4 cup American and 1 cup cheddar)



Cook macaroni in boiling salted water. While macaroni is cooking combine flour, salt, dry mustard, pepper, and paprika in a bowl. Melt margarine in a large saucepan. Add flour mixture and cook over medium heat stirring continuously. Do not brown. In a separate pan, heat milk to a simmer. Then, slowly add milk to flour mixture and stir continuously until smooth and thickened. Add Worcestershire sauce and shredded cheeses to white sauce. Stir over low heat until cheese melts. Combine well drained macaroni and sauce. Mix well. Pour into well greased casserole dish. Top with buttered bread crumbs. (To make bread crumbs: crumble leftover bread by hand; pour melted butter on top and mix.) Bake at 350 for about 30 minutes.

Rhonda Bishop, school chef, has lived in South Royalston since she was seven. Currently, she lives across the street from the house where she grew up on Pleasant St. Rhonda is lactose intolerant, so she has never tasted this recipe. On days the menu calls for mac and cheese, she brings a small sample to the school secretary, Laurie Ferrari, to check if it's "cheesy" enough.

Candle Lighted Windows: the 130th Anniversary of the Congregational Churches Parsonage

Dr. Rev. Ginger Asel

The Common of Royalston Center is an impressive sight during the Christmas Season. White electric candles in the windows of the colonial homes give a feeling of continuity and community. Church records show a possible origin of this tradition.

The significant date is January 20, 1875. The event was the dedication of the new parsonage for the town's newly called pastor and his family. When 200 guests approached the Common on the wintry Wednesday evening they were impressed by the warm glow. The pastor's wife, Sarah Johnson, had lighted a white taper in each window.



Quick math – that was exactly 130 years ago. The anniversary called for a celebration, a parsonage open house! The LBS and the women of the First and Second Congregational Churches prepared food. The candles were placed again in the windows to herald the past and present. John Divoll brought his album of homes of the historic district and shared the story of previous parsonages.

In the early years the pastors owned their own homes. Rev. Joseph Lee spent his entire lifetime of ministry (50 years) in Royalston. His home was located in the same spot as today's parsonage. Sometime before June 6, 1874, Miss Candace Bullock purchased the former Lee house and one acre of land for \$1000 and deeded it to the First Parish or Congregational Society on July 15, 1874. Lee's homestead was moved across the fields via oxen to its present location on 7 South Royalston Road.

The four-bedroom parsonage was built in the Italianate design. The distinguishing features were decorative brackets supporting elongated eaves. The large formal dining room was conducive for dinner parties. Three pantries provided ample space for food preparation and service. The spacious parlor would be used for hosting many church meetings, including small weddings. When built, the parsonage did not have modern plumbing. The two-seater was located in the woodshed between the house and the barn. A large cistern in the basement collected water. The cellar served as a root cellar. Storage was in abundance with two attic areas: a full staircase leading to the third level accessed the first attic that extends off the second floor bedroom area. Two walk-in closets were welcome features in the grand master bedroom. The main entrance once faced the Common. If you missed the open house, please call (978-249-9155) and stop by for a visit.

Winter Bulbs: What Next?

Amaryllis will bloom again next year if given decent growing conditions with plenty of water, sun and light soil until then. It is good (but not required) to place them outside in the summer. In the autumn, put in a chilly room at about 50-60 degrees for 2 months to form a flower bud. Return to room temperatures in time to re-bloom for the holidays. **Forced tulips, hyacinths, most daffodils** and other bulbs appropriate to our climate should be sparingly watered until the green leaves and stems die back after their blooms fade. Then, plant outdoors after the ground thaws. They will usually bloom in the yard a year later. Paperwhites probably have to be pitched as they can't stand the cold around here.

3 p.m. 30 December 2004

Polly Longworth

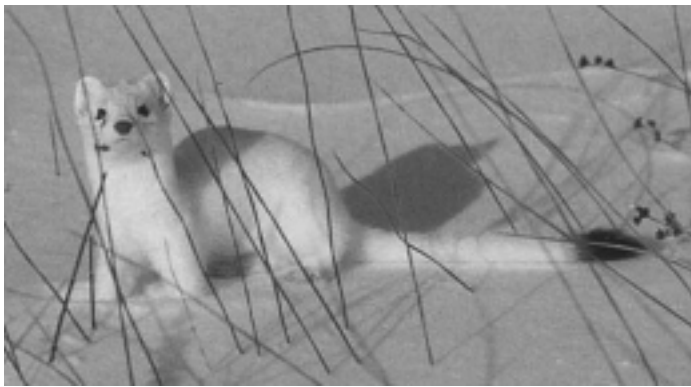
It's mid afternoon, five days beyond Christmas. The last grandchild has just been strapped, kicking and screaming, I'm sorry to say, into her car seat to be driven, along with her mother, our last, lingering guest, to the airport two hours away by my husband in our packed-to-the-gills station wagon.

I'm left suddenly alone in a deathly quiet, totally untidy house, in tears. During these six days I've served some dozen meals to fourteen inhabitants of our home, answered barrages of questions, done countless laundries and foldings, a score of dishwasher loads and unloads, steadily fed our wood furnace and kitchen wood stove, led expeditions by car and on foot, made forays on the supermarket, and conducted the rites and rituals of the family Christmas. Also, I've enjoyed the hubbub of talking, laughing, playing games, and interacting with four grown children, their four spouses and four grandchildren.

Now abandoned, the larger, outlying chaos of the world's horrible tsunami disaster and the deaths of major personages – agemates Susan Sontag and Jerry Orbach – are spread on newspapers surrounding me. Christmas, in its far more incidental way, has seemed a tsunami of sorts, arriving as a huge wave that fills every crevice of what was "normal life," focusing my attention on the immediate, on survival, then leaving a bit less suddenly as visitors pack and depart in clumps, but subsiding completely at the end, leaving desolated feelings. It's all over. All the anticipation, the cleaning and clearing of spaces to sleep, the making of beds, wrapping of gifts, baking of cakes and cookies and pies, the procurement of food – all the lead-up and excitement that climaxes in the arrival of dear ones, the joy of being together, the fun and laughter and antics of personalities – all, all is ended. And life must return to routine, the ordinary. Dropped stitches wait to be picked up, things thrust aside demand attention. Neglected chores remain. It's a sad space of readjustment, a moment of lowness before the need to brace and face a new year.

One rejoices that our heating system withstood near-zero temperatures, that our well served the extraordinary demands for repeated washings and showers, the septic field survived excessive flushings, the electrical system ran true through Christmas night gales, that the barn sheltered one couple most comfortably, its clanking weather vane disturbing sleep only in Christmas night's winds. It snowed sufficiently for sledding; several visitors dug in to help enlarge our woodpile; we shared the germs introduced from a distant city but were not felled by them; the grandson with the broken leg tobogganed without further mishap.

Gracie, the cat, had the hardest time, too scared of the commotion to emerge from the cellar for six straight days, but she seems less shell-shocked than one might expect. This old house on a dirt road in hill country survived the exuberance and wear of Christmas, as did its two aging owners. It was a great family celebration.



In Your Own Backyard

Jeff Mangum

OK, this wasn't exactly my backyard, but I was hiking Northfield Mountain on a cold December day, when across my path skittered a small, brown, long, quick animal. My first impression was a red squirrel, but on second look as it sped away, it was not a squirrel at all. It was a long-tailed weasel. Now that we are deep into winter and the landscape is draped in white, I wonder what that skinny little weasel is up to or if it has frozen into a weasel pop.

When winter comes, all of nature copes with cold and snow in different ways. I bundle up and wear hats that look silly. The long-tailed weasel in its northern range does something strange, something chameleon. It turns its fur white. Though a predator itself, it is also prey. While it likes to eat mice, voles, shrews, birds and bunnies—killing them with a Dracula-like bite to the neck or base of the skull—it in turn likes to be eaten by other things like owls, hawks, foxes, and coyotes. It's winter coat of white fur camouflages it against the snow helping to sneak past its predators. Only its eyes, nose, and tail tip remain black. The long-tailed weasel molts in the fall to white and in the spring to brown. The change of fur color is affected by hormones, the length of daylight, and temperature.

Not only may you spy the long-tailed weasel in your backyard in Royalston, since it likes our forests and farmlands, but it can be spotted widely across the United States, even into Canada and Mexico. You may not be surprised to learn that only northern populations have a white winter coat, since a white coat doesn't help a weasel in Texas!

For more information you can visit the following web sites:
www.biokids.umich.edu, www.discoverlife.org www.enature.com

ed. note: Jeff Mangum lives above the Miller's River in South Royalston. He is a ranger at Tully Dam with the Army Corps of Engineers. He's agreed to try writing a few backyard nature columns. A community newsletter is best with a diverse community of writers and voices. If you would like to write something, please contact the RCN.

Federal Study of Metacomet-Monadnock Trail

Did you know you can hop on a trail in Royalston and continue south over the Holyoke Range and Mt Tom to Long Island Sound in Connecticut or north through Rhododendron State forest to Mt Monadnock and keep going all the way to Mt. Sunapee in New Hampshire? The whole trail covers more than 260 miles. Metacomet-Monadnock Trail, which comes to Royalston from Mt. Grace in Warwick, passes Newton Cemetery and Royalston Falls and continues past glacial pot holes on Falls Brook into Richmond NH, is part of this system. The Massachusetts portion is maintained by the Berkshire Chapter of the Appalachian Mountain Club.

The M-M Trail was originally conceived and built during the 1950s by the late University of Massachusetts Professor Walter M. Banfield. It travels across land that is owned by the State, municipalities, private property owners and conservation organizations. In 2001, the US Congress approved funding to compile a feasibility study for the trail, which is currently being completed by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG), the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) and the National Park Service. As a part of the study, whether the trail should be designated as a part of the National Scenic Trails System it is being considered. The work on the feasibility study has included completing a detailed field survey and mapping the entire trail using a GPS (Global Positioning System). This work has also involved receiving input from private landowners, trail users, town officials and other interested members of the public on various issues related to the trail. The final report will include a comprehensive examination of the natural, cultural and scenic features along the trail corridor including the identification of geology, hydrology, vegetation, wildlife, land use, scenic, historic and archaeological features.

If you would like further information please contact Elizabeth Giannini at the Franklin Regional Council of Governments at 413-774-1194 extension 104 or via e-mail at o:giannini@frcog.org giannini@frcog.org.

Coyote and Owl Programs at the Millers River Environmental Center

100 Main Street, Athol.

February 9, Wednesday, 7 pm Tracking the Wily Coyote
Through his slide program, David Brown will show the evidence to look for when out in the Quabbin region that reveals the presence of the coyote, red fox, gray fox and others. "Eco-tracking" uses evidence left behind to learn about their lives.

February 11, Friday, 7 pm Owls with Bill Fregeau
Join our premier local owl expert in search of wintering owls. Limited participation and pre-registration is required. Contact MREC 978-248-9491 abnc@millersriver.net Meet at the Center

Wildlife Sightings

Polly and Chuck Longworth observed a **Snowy Owl** perched at the Orange Airport on December 2nd.

In early January on N.E. Fitzwilliam Rd., Phil Leger noticed **wild turkeys** eating from the Savoy's bird feeders as well as a **red fox** with unusual white markings nosing around the barn frequented by feral cats at the bottom of Frye Hill.

Our February Sponsors

Please thank these people and businesses for sponsoring the Newsletter



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or visit us on the web at
www.atholhospital.com

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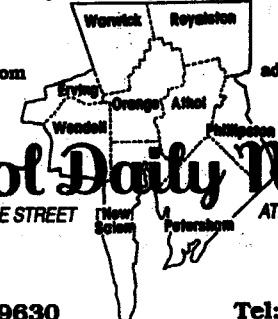
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2005 Graduates: Your hometown is proud of you. What next? Send a synopsis of your past achievements and future plans to the RCN, so we can heap praises upon your heads and wish you well. Photos are great too.

The Royalston Community Newsletter
Friends of the Phinehas S. Newton Library
PO Box 133
Royalston MA 01386

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